

# Linguistic Identity: Successful pathways for Nursing Students with English as an Additional Language

Maryann Abendroth, Ph.D., RN and Melissa Giefer, MA, ESL Specialist  
Viterbo University School of Nursing  
La Crosse, Wisconsin



## ISSUE: Background and Significance

*Many types of diversity and identities exist!*

**Linguistic identity:** refers to persons who speak more than one language. Such individuals may be students whose primary language may not be English.

These non-native English speakers can be in 2 categories:

- **English as a second language (ESL) students.**  
These students are often International Students who qualify for services and resources through university services which help them adjust to the United States and college life.
- **English as an additional language (EAL) students.**  
These are not international students yet may struggle with the English language as not being their primary language. Not having a strong grasp of the language can impact academic success, especially in nursing due to the complexity of nursing terminology.

The EAL learner is not afforded the same resources as the ESL learner because these students are not always identified in the admission process. Other primary challenges to such disadvantaged students enrolling in programs is that they often do not have the awareness, support, or experience with post-secondary education and its admission processes.

## PLAN: Method

Category	Strategies
<b>Data and Metrics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze university and School of Nursing student demographic data</li> <li>• Assess trends of diverse student enrollments</li> <li>• Assess trends of EAL student academic performance</li> <li>• Determine types of assessments to capture EAL students</li> <li>• Evaluate existing metrics and rubrics utilized by holistic assessments</li> </ul>
<b>Collaborating partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nursing Faculty, Academic Resource Center Staff to assess student challenges and existing supports</li> <li>• Advising / Admissions office and holistic admissions team to monitor diverse student enrollment and need</li> </ul>
<b>Resource Tool Kit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form a task force to create a tool kit of resources for EAL students                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Resources may include EAL support groups, writing contracts, requirements for tutoring</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Outward Focus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disseminate materials to University Community for broader use</li> <li>• Continue quality improvement to enhance the tool kit</li> </ul>
<b>University Diversity Efforts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created an Inclusion and Diversity Center</li> <li>• Formed a diversity committee comprised of faculty and staff from across campus.</li> <li>• Made recruitment of students with diverse backgrounds a strategic initiative</li> <li>• Will hire an Assistant Vice President of Human Resources and Institutional Equity</li> </ul>

## IMPACT: Expected Outcomes

### Phase 1: Short Term – Capstone Focus

- Successful recruitment of volunteers to form a EAL Task Force.
- Determination of time line for tool kit creation
- Creation of a specific nursing database to measure enrollment data and academic performance in selected courses for EAL students
- Incorporation of added metrics in the holistic admissions process to measure language ability
- Secure funding if needed for assessment tools
- Target assessment of language ability in select nursing courses

### Phase 2: Mid Term

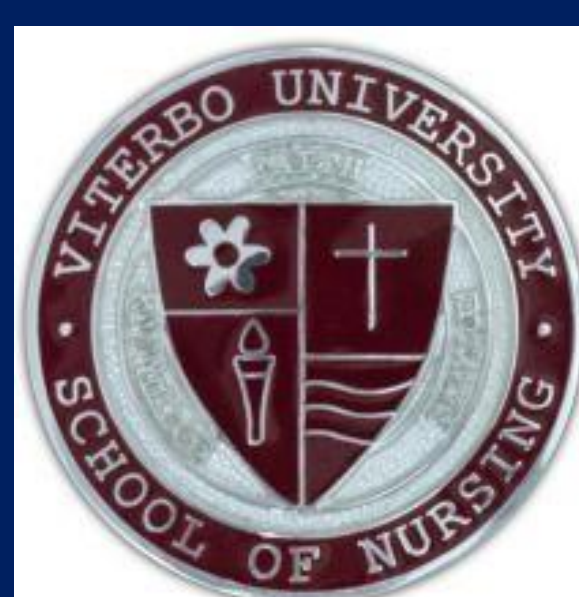
- Enhance communication between all university areas to meet the needs of students struggling with language acquisition
- Creation of tool kit and pilot testing
- Baseline measurement of EAL nursing academic performance over time as tool kit and other resources are utilized

### Phase 3: Long Term

- Evidence of continued academic success of EAL students
- Utilization of tool kit resources in other disciplines on campus
- Improved faculty / student interactions based on sustained resources for EAL students

## Project Objectives

Objective 1:	Objective 2:	Objective 3:
Establish opportunities for ongoing dialogue with university departments and the nursing program for identifying ways to address the needs of EAL nursing students.	Develop a resource tool kit in partnership with the Academic Resource Center supporting EAL nursing students.	Evaluate nursing holistic admissions metrics, student performance, and other metrics to incorporate ways to assess language acquisition and student success.



Nursing Pin



<https://ksdconsultancy.blog/2016/05/28/managing-multilanguage-support-in-navision-overview/>

## References

Choi, L. L. (2016). A support program for English as an additional language nursing students. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 27(1), 81–5. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659614554014>

Dudas, K. (2018). Living in two worlds: Experiences of English as an additional language nursing student. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 25(3), 87–92. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cpid&custid=s6222504&db=a9h&AN=132528932&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Hansen E, Beaver S. Faculty support for ESL nursing students: action plan for success. *Nurs Educ Perspect*. 2012 Jul-Aug;33(4):246-50. doi: 10.5480/1536-5026-33.4.246.

Ortmeier-Hooper, C. (2008). English may be my second language, but I'm not 'ESL.' *College Composition and Communication*, 59(3), 389-419.

Zhang, Z. (2020). Linguistic identity and language portrait. Retrieved from <https://termcoord.eu/2020/02/linguistic-identity-and-language-portrait/>

Zheng, R. X., Everett, B., Glew, P., & Salamonson, Y. (2014). Unravelling the differences in attrition and academic performance of international and domestic nursing students with English as an additional language. *Nurse Education Today*, 34(12), 1455–1459. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2014.04.021>



## Linguistic Identity: Successful pathways for Nursing Students with English as an Additional Language

# DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE



For academic nursing leadership committed to  
diversity, equity, and inclusion

Maryann Abendroth, PhD, RN  
Viterbo University, School of Nursing, College of Nursing and Health

*Co-Author(s): Melissa Giefer, MA, ESL Specialist, Academic Resource Center, Viterbo University*

---

### Biography

Dr. Maryann Abendroth is an associate professor and interim Dean at Viterbo University School of Nursing, College of Nursing and Health in La Crosse, Wisconsin. She has a PhD in Nursing Sciences and 16 years of experience working in a university setting in the role of faculty, teaching in undergraduate and graduate programs. More recently, she serves as an administrator with faculty rank. Her clinical background is hospice care and public health nursing. Her research focus is qualitative – ground theory and quantitative – instrument development related to the well-being of persons with chronic illness.



### Contact Information

Maryann Abendroth, PhD, RN  
Interim Dean  
Viterbo University, School of Nursing, College of Nursing and Health  
[miabendroth@viterbo.edu](mailto:miabendroth@viterbo.edu)  
(608)796-3677